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Lucia A Keegan 10/17/2006 10:33:52 AM From DB/Inbox: Lucia A Keegan

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 6/16/2016
TAGS: [FR](#) [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: PRESERVING LEBANESE PM SINIORA'S GOVERNMENT:
DEMARCHE DELIVERED; FRENCH THINK SYRIANS LACK MEANS TO
TOPPLE SINIORA

REF: STATE 172274

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Poloff shared reftel points 10/16 with Martin
Guillard, the MFA's Office Director equivalent for the Levant
(NEA/ELA). Guillard said the French are "absolutely in
agreement" on the need to support PM Siniora and to pass a
sobering message to Damascus. (He did not indicate whether
the French themselves would directly demarche the Syrians
along these lines, given France's current policy of minimal
substantive contact with Syria.) He noted continuing debate
within the EU over whether to send high-level delegations to
Damascus, and said France continues to stress to its EU
partners that it would not be useful to give the Syrians any
"positive signals" at present.

¶2. (C) Guillard added he was "not too pessimistic" about the
future of PM Siniora's government both because "Siniora is a
big boy who demonstrated this summer that he can manage a
crisis" and because Siniora's position is not as fragile as
it appears. The Quai assesses that Siniora enjoys
substantial popular support and that while Syria may have a
direct interest in toppling him, Hizballah does not. This is
in part because there is no obvious replacement for Siniora,
and in part because Hizballah still needs time to retrench
politically and militarily following this summer's combat
with Israel. Guillard summed up the Quai's thinking by
saying: "Even if Syria is very determined to see Siniora
fall, we doubt Syria has the means to topple him because it
is not in Hizballah's direct interest to do so."

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